

THE
Sin against the Holy Ghost;

Or, 1578/1848
The Sin unto Death

Briefly discours'd of

- I. Proving what this Sin is. And,
II. That all other Sins, how Great and Heinous soever, may be forgiven unto Men; but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the World to come.

To which is added,

Some Instructions how a Man may walk and not commit this unpardonable Sin.

Mat. 12 31. That all manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men, except it be the Sin against the Holy Ghost.

By Mr. Robert Rufel

EDINBURGH,

Printed by James Watson, for John Crossby
1700.

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Of the Unpardonable Sin AGAINST THE H O L Y G H O S T:

Or,

The Sin unto DEATH.

John V. part of Verſ. 18. *There is a Sin unto Death.*

THere is no meer Man ſince the Fall, that can live without Sin, for all are Sinners: But yet there are Degrees of Sin; ſome Sins in their own Nature are ſmall, others are more great and heinous. Many Sins there are that are great, yet pardonable, and one Sin there is unpardonable; and whoſoever commits that one Sin ſhall have no forgiveness, but muſt for ever bear the weight and puniſhment, both of that and of all his other Sins. There is ſuch a Sin as St. John ſpeaks of here in my Text; that this is *a Sin unto Death*. And now I come to the Explication of the Words; from whence I ſhall raiſe this Point of Doctrine:

Doct. That amongst other Sins committed by fallen Mankind, there is only one Sin that is a Sin

unto Death, & whosoever committeth that,
he hath no Forgiveness, neither in this World,
nor in the World to come.

Now for my further proceeding on this Subject I shall lay open to you,

First, What the Sin unto Death is?

Secondly, That all our Sins, how great and heinous soever, may be forgiven.

Thirdly, That this sin alone shall never be forgiven.

Fourthly, The reason why that Sin alone is unpardonable. And then,

Lastly, I shall conclude all with a few words of Application.

I shall begin first with the Description of this unpardonable Sin; where I shall endeavour to make as plain a Description of it, as possible I can; and in doing of it, I shall I. shew you Negatively, what is not this Sin. II. I shall shew you positively what it is.

I. I shall shew you Negatively, what is not this Sin unto Death; or in what Degree a Man may Sin, and yet not commit that unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost.

1. It is not every quenching of the motions of the Spirit that is that sin, it is true when the Holy Ghost comes with a still Voice & knocks at the Doors of Sinners hearts for Entrance, he often comes & strives with them, and secretly Wooes & beseeches them to leave their Sins, & be converted; yet they quench and stifle all his Motions and bear up their Hearts against him and will not be obedient to his Heavenly Calls, now such sin grievously against the Holy Ghost:

Against the Holy Ghost.

But yet this alone is not the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, for many who have stood it out a long time, & have often quenched and grieved the Holy Spirit, yet at last they have been wrought upon unto sincere Conversion.

2. A Man may commit many heinous & crying Sins, & yet not be guilty of the unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost. A Man may be an Idolater, a Whoremonger, a Fornicator, a Murderer, and work Witchcraft, and sin with a very high hand; nay he may live in all manner of Filthiness, and Lewdness, and yet not be under the Guilt of unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost. Thus we read 2 Chron. 33. that Manasse sinned with a very high Hand; he was an Idolater, an Inchanter, and worked Witchcraft, and dealt with Familiar Spirits, and wrought much evil in the Sight of the Lord. And Mary Magdalen had Seven Devils cast out of her, Luke 8. 2. and yet both were pardoned.

3. A Man may sin presumptuously against great Light and Knowledge, and yet not commit this Sin unto Death: For Peter, when he denied Christ, he did it against great knowledge of Christ, he knew Christ to be his Lord and Saviour, he was one of Christ's beloved Disciples; and for all that how strongly he denied Christ, and that with an Oath too; and yet for all that, Christ looked upon him with a merciful Eye, and that he repented and was forgiven.

4. It is not every Malicious Sin that is the unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost; for St. Paul certainly had great Malice in his heart when

when he went on so furiously to persecute the Church of God; and yet was converted, and became a Preacher of the Gospel of Christ, which before he persecuted.

5. *And lastly,* It is not final Unbelief, nor final Impenitence, that is the unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost, tho some be of Opinion, that it is because that Sin is unpardonable; and Christ himself hath said, *Mat. 12. 31. That all manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Man, except it be the Sin against the Holy Ghost.* But you are to take the words of our Saviour in their true sense and meaning; it is all manner of Sin and Blasphemy committed within the compass of a Man's Life, that shall be forgiven, except the Sin against the Holy Ghost; for the Sin of final impenitency, and final Unbelief, is not compleared untill the very Moment of a Man's Death; and then you all know, that there is no Repentance and consequently no Pardon after Death, for Christ saith, *He that Sins against the Holy Ghost, hath no forgiveness, neither in this World, nor in the World to come.* Now, why should Christ say, in this World, if there be no space to be forgiven in, in this World? But a Man may commit the unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost even many years before his Death. Besides there are many thousands that die in Impenitency and Unbelief, and are damned, and yet never committed the unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost:

Thus have I shewed you Negatively, what is not this unpardonable Sin, none of these Sins in particular is that Sin.

II. I come now to shew you positively what this Sin unto Death is, and wherein this unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost doth consist. Now there are several Opinions in the World about it; some hold one thing, some another: But I have not time nor room to dispute concerning others Opinions about it, but I will endeavour, through God's help, to lead you to the plain sight of it, by the Light of the Holy Scripture.

Now in the first place you must know, that there are two sorts of People that cannot commit this unpardonable Sin.

1. The true Believer cannot commit it, tho many times for their Trial, God suffers them to fall foully into many grievous Sins; yet they being rooted into Christ, they are upheld by free Grace and Mercy, that they cannot fall into this unpardonable Sin,

2. The grossly ignorant cannot commit it, because it is a Sin against great Light and Knowledge. Indeed the greatest part of the World shall be damned; yet amongst the greater part, there is but few of them that can commit that unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost.

Some have both Light and Grace, these shall not commit the unpardonable Sin. Again, some have neither Light nor Grace, these cannot commit it. But there are some again that have

have Light and no Grace; these are they that are liable to commit the unpardonable Sin again the Holy Ghost. Now there must be two ingredients to make up this unpardonable Sin; that is Light in the head, and Malice in the heart; without these two the Sin against the Holy Ghost cannot be committed; For to sin against great light and knowledge, is not that Sin alone; nor yet to sin ignorantly, out of that Malice, is not that Sin but they must joyn both together, to make up this unpardonable Sin. This we see by the example of St. Peter and St. Paul, Peter he denied Christ, and forswore himself too, and that grievously against Light and knowledge; for he knew Christ to be the only begotten Son of God, and he knew God in him; he was one of Christ's Disciples, & one of his beloved Disciples too; he was taught of Christ, and had experimental Knowledge of his Love and Favour, and yet he wickedly with an Oath denied him. Now if Peter had done his out of Malice and Spight then he had committed that Sin unto Death, for which there is no Forgiveness: But Peter had no Malice in his Heart all this while, even at that time when he denied Christ; as you may see Mat. 26 when Christ told him, *Before the Cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.* He answered, *If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee.* And then denying him thro' Infirmary, and Weakness of the Flesh: When he considered what he had done, *he went out and wept bitterly,* V. 75. And Paul, he had great Malice and Spight against the ways and People

People of God; as you may see *Acts* 9. 1. Now here was a great Rage and Malice in *Saul*, against the Ways and People of God; but doing it ignorantly he at last hearing a Voice, saying, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* And receiving of a Light from Heaven, that it was *Jesus* that he persecuted, he was pricked at the Heart and trembling and astonished, said, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* Now by these two places of Scripture, you may plainly see, that *Peter* sinned against great Light. And *Paul* out of great Malice, yet none of them both committed the unpardonable Sin again the Holy Ghost. But whensoever Light and Malice meet together in one Man, then there is a Sin against the Holy Ghost. Now as all other Sins, so this Sin against the Holy Ghost may be committed in Thought, Word, or Action.

1. In Thought, that is, when a wicked Man against his clear Light and Knowledge, doth but conceive a malicious Thought, or Purpose towards persecuting the Gospel of Christ, or of the Saints of Christ to hinder the Work of the Holy Ghost in them.

This Sin is to be thought, was the Sin of the lost Angels; for which Cause they were lost without all Hopes of Pardon. Now some dispute whether their sin was a Sin of the thought; but I say with all likelihood it was: For the Angels being only Spirits, without Bodies, and so have no use of bodily Tongues, it could not be committed in Word; nor yet could they commit it in Action, because they were cast out

out of Heaven, before they could bring it in-
to Practice, therefore it must be a Sin of the
Thought.

Now their Sin was this, Their Habitation
being in the highest Heavens, next under
God himself, they had exceeding great light,
and Knowledge; they had more knowledge
than all the Men in the World ever had, and
were happy above all other Creatures; but
when not being contented with this Estate,
they thought to be as high as God himself;
therefore maliciously sought to make War a-
gainst the Son of God, and put him out of his
Throne; for which Cause they were immedi-
ately thrust out of Heaven, never more to see
the Face of Mercy. Thus their Sin being of
the same Nature with the Sin against the Holy
Ghost they were excluded all hopes of Pardon.

12. This may be committed in Word too;
that is, when a Man speaks blasphemously and
maliciously of Christ and his holy way: This
was the Sin of the Scribes and Pharisees, *Mark,*
3. 22. Therefore saith Christ unto them, *Ver.*
28. 29.

Now the Reason of this Speech of our blef-
sed Saviour, is shewed in *Ver. 22* because they
said, *He hath an unclean spirit*; which plainly
shews, that these Scribes had spoken Blasphe-
my against the Holy Ghost. These Scribes
were great learned Men, and they could know
no other but that Christ was the Son of God,
and they knew that he cast out Devils by the
Spirit of God; and yet out of spite to Christ

maliciously and blasphemously said, *That he cast out Devils by Belzebub the Chief of Devils.* Thus these Scribes committed the unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost: And, that in a Word.

3. This Sin may be committed in Action too, that is when a Man being once thoroughly enlightened, and entered upon a holy course of Life, and tasted the Comforts of God's Spirit, and had some foretaste of the Joys of Heaven, and not only makes Profession of the Gospel, but teaches it to others; he at last takes a dislike of these holy Courses, and thro' spite and malice, utterly forsakes, opposes and persecutes those good ways of God, which he before professed and taught. But to sum up this Point: This unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost is fully described by the Apostle to the Hebrews, Chap. 10. 29. 27. 28. Likewise, Heb. 6. 4. 5. 6.

Now the Sin against the Holy Ghost is briefly this: It is a wilful and malicious Opposing of the known Truth.

1. This Sin unto Death is an opposing Sin; now to oppose a thing, is to contradict it, or gain say; when a Man says so, and so denies it and says it is not so; when a Man says a thing must be done, he says again it must not, nor shall not be done; but a Man may be an opposing Man, and yet cannot commit this sin: Therefore:

2. It is the Truth that we must oppose; that is, we must utterly oppose and reject Christ, who said, *I am the Truth* John 14. 6.

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Now the Reason of this Speech of our bleſſed Saviour, is ſhewed in *Ver. 21* becauſe they ſaid, *He hath an unclean Spirit*; which plainly ſhews, that theſe Scribes had ſpoken Blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt. Theſe Scribes were great learned Men, and they could know no other but that Chriſt was the Son of God, and they knew that he caſt out Devils by the Spirit of God; and yet out of ſpite to Chriſt

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He opposeth all his Threatnings, and will not believe his promises, and counts him to be a Seducer of the People, and counts the Blood of the Covenant to be an unholy thing; nay he also opposes the Spirit of Christ, who is the Spirit of Truth: So that he will not obey his Motions, and will not be led nor guided by him; but a Man may oppose the truth, and yet do it ignorantly: Therefore,

3. It must be the known truth that he opposeth he must be once enlightned: But you must know, that it is not only a Notional Knowledge and Humane Learning. He may know much of God, and of his will in the Letter of the Word, and yet not capable of committing this unpardonable Sin: But he must be so far enlightned, as to see the Evil that is in Sin, and the Excellency of Christ; he must taste of the Heavenly Gift, and be made partaker of the Holy Ghost, and taste of the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, and by the Blood of the Covenant, which he counts as an unholy thing, he is in part sanctified and cleansed from many Sins; he must have sweet Comunión with God in his Word and Sacraments; he must have some Taste of the Love and Favour of God, and Comforts of his Spirit, and be refreshed by it, and taste of the Love and Favour of God, and Comforts of his Spirit and taste of the Joys of Heaven, and have some Fore-taste of the Happiness of the World to come.

4. He must oppose the known Truth willfully, he must willfully fall away, after he

hath received the Knowledge of the Truth; Other sins are committed through Infirmitie, but this sin is wilfull, the Will is the chief Actor in it: And to compleat and make up this unpardonable Sin, there is,

5. Malice in the Heart; without this, this sin cannot be committed; it must be a malicious opposing of the known Truth.

Now a Man having gone thus far, he comes in the last place to be an Apostate: Now for such a one willfully, spitefully, and maliciously to fall away, he so falls, as never to rise more. It is true the Children of God fall and that often, and yet riseth again; but when they fall through Weakness of infirmity, and not willfully and maliciously; but these wicked Wretches fall wilfully and maliciously, and so fall finally. Against such, the Door of Mercy is ever shut: Concerning such, St. Peter saith 2 Pet. 2: 21, 22. There is such another dreadful Place of Scripture against these Apostates; that is, Heb. 10 26.

Object But what is the reason then that this Sin cannot be forgiven.

The Reason arises from the Nature of this Sin; for this Sin, by whomsoever it is committed, hardens the heart and sears the Conscience; so that there is no place for Repentance to be wrought, neither for that or any other Sin. This Sin is called the sin against the Holy Ghost, because it is a sin against the Person of the Holy Ghost, so is all sin against his Person, but it is called the sin against the Holy Ghost

Ghoſt. becauſe it is againſt the Office and Work of the Holy Ghoſt. Now every one of the Three Perſons have their particular Work: The work of the Father is to create; the Work of the Son is to redeem loſt Sinners; and the Work of the Holy Ghoſt is to enlighten, convince, ſanctifie and convert them. Now a Man committing this unpardonable Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, rejects all this Work, of the Spirit. Now for a Man to be thoroughly enlightned by the Holy Ghoſt that he comes to know the evil of Sin, and of his loſt and undone Condition without Chriſt; and that none but the Merits of Chriſt can ſave him, then for him wilfully and maliciously to oppoſe him, and the Work of his Spirit and Will not be beholding to him for Salvation, now for ſuch one to be forgiven, is utterly impoſſible.

Object. But why is it impoſſible? Nothing is impoſſible with God.

A Man through ignorance may deny Chriſt and maliciously fall from the Profeſſion of the Truth into all Wickedneſs, as did Saint Paul, and the Jews that Crucified Chriſt, and yet not falling againſt Light and Knowledge, there is room for the Holy Ghoſt to work upon him, to enlighten him, and to convince him of his Folly, and ſo makes way for Conversion. And beſides, a Man after he hath been enlightned, and yet falls back thro' Infirmary, and the weakneſs of the Fleſh, as Peter did,

and doth not fail willfully and maliciously, then the Holy Ghost, may work upon him, and work in him: a deep sorrow, for abusing so much Love and Mercy, and so carrie on his good Work unto Salvation. But for a man when he is once enlightned by the Holy Ghost, and has had some taste of Gods love and favour, and some fore-taste of the Joys of Heaven, and then at last utterly opposing this Illuminating Work of the Spirit, and willfully and maliciously to fall away, and so to reject the Spirits renewing Work. Alas then the Holy Ghost has done, he has nothing more that he can work in him; for this wretched Creature, has utterly rejected him; his enlightning Work, his convincing Work, his sanctifying Work, he has utterly rejected Christs Pardon, Heaven and all. Now this poor Wretch is past all Hopes of Mercy, all hopes of Pardon; nay, for such a one we are forbidden to pray; as you see in the Verse, wherein my Text is apart. Now Christ prayed for them who maliciously crucified him, Luke 23. 34. Saying, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. Alas they knew not what they were doing, for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory, 1 Cor. 2. 8. But if they had known & yet crucified him, Christ would not have spent his breath to pray for them; for it would have been utterly in vain. For when a Man has committed this unpardonable Sin; neither the Prayers in Heaven nor Earth, can do him any good; for as the Text saith, *There is a Sin unto Death.*

I shall conclude with a few words of Applaudation.

1. Watch very diligently against all sin; but above all, take special heed of those sins that come near to the sin against the Holy Ghost; and they are these: Hypocrisie, taking only the outward Profession of Religion, and so dissembling and mocking of God, sinning willfully against Conviction of Conscience, and against great Light and Knowledge; sinning presumptuously, and with an high hand. These Sins, tho' none of them are the direct sin against the Holy Ghost, yet they will come very near to it; therefore take especial heed of them, lest they in time, should bring you to the committing of that unpardonable Sin. And

II. Labour to be sincere in Religion, and by true Faith ingraft your selves into Christ; for they that be with Christ, can never commit this unpardonable sin: For know this, that amongst all the sins committed by fallen Man-kind, there is one sin, *that is a Sin unto Death*, which is the unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost, which whosoever commits it, hath no Forgiveness, neither in this World nor in the World to come. Now you shall know, what

I desire you for to take your Bibles and search the places of Scriptures here cited, And the Lord give you understanding in all these things.

FINIS